

**BALTIMORE CITY DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING
URBAN DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE REVIEW PANEL
MEETING MINUTES**

Date: April 16, 2015

Meeting No.: 202

Project: Canton Crossing Redevelopment - Merritt

Phase: Schematic

Location: Canton Crossing, Master Plan Sites A1 and A2, 3401 Boston Street, between Baylis Street, South Highland and Cardiff Avenues

PRESENTATION:

Mike Burton of Urban Design Group introduced the project parameters, goals, context and site analysis. He noted that the project conforms to the approved 2007 Canton Crossing Master Plan, and has been presented to the Canton Community Association.

The site is located at 3401 Boston Street, at the current location of the Merritt Athletic Club. The general proposal is for two mixed-use buildings. Fronting Boston Street is proposed a 167' tall building with 12,690 SF of retail, 102,626 SF of office use, and 353 parking spaces. Fronting Cardiff Avenue is proposed an 80' tall building with 9,250 SF of retail and 313 parking spaces. The following design parameters were also mentioned:

1. Adjustments to the Boston Street right of way to accommodate the future Red Line
2. Phasing plan that permits the existing Fitness Center to continue to operate
 - a) Parking garage on A2 site will be constructed first
 - b) The second phase office building establishes the architectural language for the parking garage and for limited modification to the Fitness Center
 - c) Material palette is inspired by adjacent industrial buildings, e.g. The Broom Factory
3. Mr. Burton shared images of existing industrial buildings in the Boston Street corridor, and character precedents for building and garage

COMMENTS FROM THE PANEL:

The panel felt that the architecture and site design for the project is underdeveloped, including the building massing and expression. The current design is too simple and vague. The following comments were given pertaining to the urban design and massing concepts.

Site and Urban Design

1. Provide standards for the existing approved PUD that have been implemented, and are being matched with the new development
2. Consider current placement of service rooms on the face of the garage along South Highland Avenue. Program space and storefront along South Highland would activate the street and improve pedestrian character and engagement w/ the building.
3. The panel suggested that the developer and the architect create a stronger through building connection from Boston Street to the entrance to the Fitness Center by shifting the lobby toward Baylis Street.

4. The fencing/screening in front of the existing Fitness Center should be reconsidered. Consider that additional public space could be gained by using a green screen or other system that dresses the face of the existing building.

Massing Studies

1. The panel acknowledges the vertical challenges associated with the office building proportions of nearly equal parking and office building components.
2. The panel requested the design team to reconsider the transition from parking to office. Consider eliminating the brick frames that extend to the office floor.
3. The expressed column bay spacing is somewhat awkward, particularly at the end bays with longer spans. Consider other design approaches to address.
4. The panel is very concerned about the treatment of the garage decks. Advance the design proposal to more clearly address.
5. The retail level needs further development.
6. The corner expression, disconnected from the entrance, seems like a false note.
7. The precedents presented are handsome images, and could inform the design refinement with further study.

PANEL RECOMMENDATION: Approval of schematic architecture withheld.

Attending:

Mike Burton, Nariman El Said, and Jessica Lewis – Urban Design Group

Adam Bednar – The Daily Record

Gary Swatko and Josh Asbury – Merritt

Jenn Ladd- Baltimore Business Journal

Caroline Hecker, Esq. – Rosenberg Martin

Natalie Sherman – Baltimore Sun

UDARP Panel Members - Messrs. Gary Bowden, Rich Burns, and David Haresign*

Planning Department- Tom Stosur, Christina Gaymon, Wolde Ararsa, Kate Edwards,